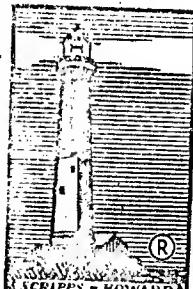


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A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER

"Give light and the people will find their own way"

John T. O'Rourke,
EditorRay F. Mack,
Business Manager

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The Super Super Jet

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S announcement Saturday that a 2000-mile-per-hour plane has been perfected, and is flying, is a sensation, apparently, in the aviation world.

The President described the plane in generalities, and put a flat "strictly classified" label on details. Which certifies that its value and function as a military weapon involves something more than merely a faster plane.

However that is, the import of this new speed vehicle on commercial flying could be spectacular. For one of the aspects Mr. Johnson did reveal is that the plane is the result of "mastery of the metallurgy and fabrication of titanium metal."

Titanium, because it is light, strong and resistant to heat, shock and corrosion, long has been eyed for supersonic planes. But fabrication problems stood in the way. The new A-11 plane, as the President dubbed it, apparently has solved these problems. If so, all kinds of new developments can open up.

While Government officials claim the A-11 cannot be converted directly to

transport use, it seems evident that the cost estimates of the supersonic transport the Federal Aviation Agency is pushing can be substantially reduced. This should strengthen Sen. Mike Monroney's argument that the plane manufacturers should assume more of the cost risk, and the taxpayers less.

The announcement of the A-11 raises questions, too. Such as how come the Air Force persuaded the House just recently to appropriate \$40 million for a new interceptor (one of the avowed uses of the A-11) when such a plane already was flying? (Sen. Russell said there are "11 or 12" in the air.) Why was the Boeing proposal to use titanium in the controversial TFX one of the reasons for rejecting that company's proposal?

In the light of the secrecy which shrouds the new plane, prompt answers probably can't be expected. But then the taxpayers frequently have to accept a lot on faith. At least we can hope the new plane, and all it suggests, will so revolutionize air travel that the public investment (not even intimated) can be wholly justified.